

NEWSPAPER: A PROSPECTIVE TOOL FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The newspaper has been one of the root lines of education because it empowers the readers with day to day happenings, shapes the language of learners and inculcates the reading habit among the adults. It is worthy to record that newspaper is a living textbook for all seasons and for all reasons. For more than two decades, in India, the newspaper has been used in the classroom as a tool of instruction to develop language skills. Newspaper based activities inside the classroom can pave way for significant progress in Reading, Writing, and Speaking skills. This paper deploys a multitude of activities that can be performed in the classroom amidst language learners.

KEYWORDS: Newspaper, Education, Language Skills, Activities

INTRODUCTION

Second Language (L2) acquisition is a daunting challenge that most of the citizens of Anglophonic countries face. It is definitely overwhelming to master a language such as English which is characterized by very fine intricacies. Learning a new language exposes the speaker to different cultures, traditions, economic prospects, and lifestyle. Especially with a global language like English, an ascend in the professional front is bound to happen. Knowledge and exposure to the English language open newer portals of job options, ensuring a bright future.

To quote the words of Arthur Baer “a newspaper is a circulating library with high blood pressure.” It plays a dominant role in empowering readers with current affairs globally and also helps to mold the language of learners. It also aids to inculcate the habit of reading among both the children and the adults. A striking feature of the newspaper is that it stays afresh every morning without losing its charm and grace. Nevertheless, it has been deemed the livingtext book for all seasons and reasons.

In his famous essay “On Books and Reading”, Charles Lamb writes, “Newspapers always excite curiosity.” Unlike textbooks, the newspaper adds a special element to the classroom environment as the horizons of the classroom expand fade as it brings the whole world to the desk and keeps the minds of the learners busy as a bee. For more than two decades, in India, the newspaper has been employed as a tool of instruction within the walls of the classroom to develop language skills. For any second language learner, newspapers offer a reliable platform to enrich their language skills by providing an arena for inquisitive, innovative and informative active and passive participation in learning.

Newspaper associates the learner and the world outside offering greater exposure. Newspaper based activities inside the classroom can pave way for significant progress in Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking skills, the four pillars of communication. Besides, newspaper improves creativity, reasoning, and critical thinking skills, makes learning fun, cost-effective, works as a real-time material for language learning thereby proving to be a successful working model for classroom activities. Newspapers also help in expanding one's vocabulary. The level of vocabulary used in national newspapers necessitates a more intellectual, educated, professional, and influential readership than the level of writing and word choice used in many local newspapers.

Newspapers are a reflection of a variety of emotional standards and exhibit an array of news articles that suit various occasions and instances. Learners can utilize this platform to learn words of different domains and jargons. This paper lists a multitude of activities that can be conducted in the classroom amidst English language learners for their benefit.

Implications of Newspaper in English Learning

Headline Framing

Task: Learners can be asked to read aloud and then write the headline(s) of the newspapers and then use the same words in a different context.

Lesson: the exercise helps to improve reading and vocabulary of the learners.

Picture Play

Task: Learners are asked to collect pictures from the newspaper and using these pictures as connecting links, the learners can be asked to create their own stories. The framed story should be narrated as well as written.

Lesson: The activity would help to improve creativity and writing skills of the learners. Apart from reading skills and vocabulary, the activity would also help to develop articulation, pronunciation, and intonation in speech.

Pictionary

Task: Any image from the newspaper which can be scenery or an event can be selected and a copy of it can be distributed to the learners and they can be asked to describe the picture. The descriptive account of the learner can then be discussed in class.

Lesson: The activity promotes the writing abilities of the learner along with vocabulary.

Artistic Anecdotes

Task: The learners can be put in groups and can be instructed to select a list of words from a variety of columns such as politics, science, technology, weather, editorial, regional, sports, etc and an anecdote based on those words is to be written.

Lesson: This can increase the creative flavor and can be a good exercise for the learners to use a word of a particular domain in a different context.

Agenda Sketch.

Task: Learners can be asked to go through a TV or Radio schedule in the newspaper and produce a short dramatic speech briefing the same in their own words.

Lesson: The session would resemble a mini news reading activity. Students would get an exposure to such a kind of speaking activity.

Ad- Draft

Task: Learners can be put into groups and asked to draft a new advertisement for a product by using the models found in the newspaper as a template. Learners can also be instructed to enact the sketched advertisement.

Lesson: This activity can provide some insights on the importance of clarity in the expression of ideas.

Framing Counter Liners

Task: After observing the comics section, bottom liners and graffiti from the newspaper, the learners can be instructed to frame counter dialogues and one-liner for the same.

Lesson: The exercise would enable students to frame proper sentences using the various entities of parts of speech.

Synonym and Antonym Search

Task: The instructor can give a list of vocabulary from the newspaper and ask the learners to find out words with the closest meaning. The teacher can also give synonymous words of a particular word and can instruct the learners to find out the exact word from the newspaper. Using Thesaurus may be handy for learners in this activity.

Lesson: This activity is based on skimming and scanning. The learners are also introduced to Dictionary and Thesaurus through this activity. Ways and methods to use the dictionary and thesaurus can also be taught which would prove to be beneficial for them.

Idioms and Phrases

Task: Learners may be instructed to put down any 10 idioms and phrases from the newspaper and use the same in different sentences of their own.

Lesson: An exposure to the aspect of idioms and phrases, this exercise would help learners understand the meanings of different idioms, phrases and also their appropriate usage.

Review of Writing

Task: Learners can be instructed to have a glance at the entertainment column and write a review of a movie of their choice.

Lesson: This activity develops the creativity and language skills of the learners and opens up a new genre of writing to the learners.

Spot the Parts.

Task: The learners can be asked to identify the various parts of speech from a lengthy article of their interest from their newspaper.

Lesson: The exercise would provide a better understanding of the various parts of speech, its properties, and usage to the learners.

Sentence Framing

Task: Learners can be asked to pick out a list of words from their favorite column in the newspaper and write down new sentences using those words.

Lesson: Apart from enriching one's vocabulary, the exercise also helps to understand the usage of words in various contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper elucidates the various activities that can be conducted within the classroom based on newspapers. The unassuming ways in which newspapers help us to improvise our language is inevitable. With its efficiency being proved, newspapers also prove to be friendly on the pocket, making it affordable for everyone. Newspapers, therefore, are an indispensable tool in the language learning process. Putting good use of this dynamic, conventional yet contemporary English learning tool is result yielding and can help the learner earn laurels.

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